

match, so I had no idea what to expect. The first round was spectacular, almost like a ballet with Howard Cosell shouting out statistics and explaining movements. Then the fight turned nasty, with bones crunching and snapping, flesh splitting; a fine spray of sweat and blood filled the air and specked my clothing. I felt its stickiness on my face, in my hair. Nausea overcame me, and I couldn't watch. I tried to stare straight ahead and focus on Ali's dancing feet, but blood blotched the white tarp. The fight was over in fifteen minutes, the longest minutes of my life. But at least Ali had won.

Even the local hospital was bizarre. When my hand had healed, I started a new job registering patients at the hospital emergency room. I worked from 6 P.M. to 2 A.M. and tended to a roomful of broken bodies, mostly skiers who'd had accidents. Roaming the clubs, I had noticed that occasionally a player, usually a middle-aged white man, keeled over and was promptly and efficiently removed. Now, in the hospital emergency room, I received such casualties. They appeared to be dead on arrival, but the corpse was always wheeled into the examining room, and then the doctor would emerge and direct me to mark the box indicating that he had died in the hospital. One evening, I asked the nurse why it was done that way.

"No one dies in the clubs."

There was also a legend, always relayed with a wink, that organized crime was absent from the Tahoe clubs, that Tahoe was a clean, family place, where gambling ranked second only to nature for healthy recreation. But I knew that those hard-eyed young men who arrived alone and bleeding at the emergency room, right hand cleanly severed, were lying about having caught their hands in snowblowers. And I noted the small news items in the local paper about unidentified bodies that washed up on the lakeshore.

When the cast came off my hand, I rented a small, furnished apartment on the California side of the lake at the foot of the Heavenly Valley ski lift. I had not lived alone for nearly five years, and the loneliness I felt was unexpected and painful. I dreaded going home after work.

One night in February, a blizzard roared in while I was at Harrah's

372

Club after my hospital shift. As I left to go home, the snowblowers were already at work clearing the parking lot. On Highway 50, visibility was nil. I missed my left turn so turned toward the lake into the Tahoe Keys residential development to find a safe place to turn around. I kept turning right into cul-de-sacs, and I couldn't discern where I was. My tires whined and spun; I was stuck in a snowbank in a driveway. I walked to the door and rang the bell. The lights flashed on, and a man about my age, wrapped in a white terry cloth robe, opened the door.

"What do you want?" He sounded as if he thought I might be an unwelcome solicitor or a Jehovah's Witness selling the *Watchtower* in the middle of the night.

"I'm sorry to wake you. I was trying to turn around and got stuck in your driveway. I need to call the auto club."

"I'll call them," he said, and slammed the door in my face.

Immediately the lights went out in the house. I supposed he'd called the tow truck and returned to his warm bed. I climbed back in my car to wait. I nearly fell asleep and was on the border of thought and dream when I was jolted awake. A red light flashed—the tow truck, I assumed, although it crossed my mind that most tow trucks flashed yellow lights. I stepped out of the car and before I could focus on who was speaking, a male voice blared, "Hands up, don't move."

I raised my arms. I faced two men in uniforms, handguns drawn—Smith and Wesson .38's, I noted.

"Step away from the vehicle." The speaker flashed a paper in front of me, illuminated by his foot-long steel flashlight that I imagined cracking my skull at any moment. He had a search warrant.

"There's been some misunderstanding. I'm waiting for a tow truck to pull me out. I'm stuck."

"The resident here reported a public disturbance and gave us your license plate number. Texas, huh? Your name's Roxanne Dunbar, right?"

The quiet one rummaged around inside my car. He took the keys from the ignition and opened the trunk. My mind raced: Is he planting something? A gun, drugs, explosives, false documents? Is this a setup?

373

The first cop read me my rights: "You have the right to remain silent . . ." I was handcuffed and pushed headfirst into the back of the patrol car.

Once again, I entered the world of fear, the kind of fear that elicited an automatic response—calm, clear, silent, cunning. Animal fear. I felt comfortable in that familiar altered state—I had been there many times during the past two years. Now I was wide awake and alert.

As the cop pulled me out of the patrol car he said, "You're some cool cookie, a real pro." He winked at me. Perhaps he thought I was a hooker rather than a revolutionary. Cops didn't wink at revolutionaries.

I glanced around and recognized my surroundings. The squat redwood building that housed the South Lake Tahoe city jail was adjacent to the building where I met my probation officer, and not far from the one-room city library where I checked out books. I hadn't noticed that the building was a jail.

Inside, the shiny white walls reflected bright fluorescent lights and within seconds a migraine consumed me—bright light reflected off shiny surfaces always brought one on. My calm gave way to the symptoms of a migraine—dizziness, disorientation, and nausea. I tripped and stumbled, off balance. I filled out the forms placed before me, writing erratically below the lines. As I was being fingerprinted my hands jerked uncontrollably, and the annoyed officer nearly broke my wrist holding my hand down to get clear prints. I knew he thought I was resisting. I tried to explain: "I'm sorry. I have a migraine headache."

They booked me for public disturbance, a misdemeanor in the criminal code. I needed a \$1,000 bond, but there was no bondsman available until 9 A.M. They locked me in one of the two jail cells. The bright ceiling light tortured my migraine.

"Can you turn the light off, please?" I pleaded to my keeper as he locked the barred door.

"Against regulations," he said.

"May I have an aspirin?" I knew aspirin would not faze a full-blown migraine, but I was desperate.

374

"No way."

"A cup of coffee, please?" I begged, whining shamelessly. Caffeine helped relieve my migraines.

"Hey, lady, this ain't no hotel."

I crawled under the thin, brown wool blanket and covered my head. The room steamed from overheating; it was probably around 85 degrees in there. The blanket was hot and scratchy, and I couldn't breathe with it over my head. The throbbing pain was unbearable. I moaned and tried to muffle the sound. I squirmed and writhed and finally fell into blackness. The clatter of keys on the bars startled me awake. "Stop that damned screaming."

I could almost hear the echoes of my wailing bouncing off the walls. It happened when I fell asleep with a migraine. I lost consciousness of the pain, but my brain registered it and I wailed, an eerie, piercing singsong that Jimmy once tape-recorded for me to hear. An animal sound.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"It's going in the police report, so cut it out."

I sat on the side of the bed, head in hands, rocking with the pain. A civilian bundled in a parka shoved a bright yellow box through the bars. "Breakfast," he said and left.

Coffee, a large paper cup of muddy coffee. It had cooled. I drank the whole cup almost without taking a breath. I waited for the medicinal effect, and it did not fail me. The pressure eased, like air leaving a balloon. I was enveloped in that aura of well-being, the ecstasy that always occurs when a migraine retreated.

I ate the cold scrambled eggs, and then slept blissfully until the bondsman woke me. We walked to his office across the highway. He was willing to take the pink slip on my car as collateral for the bond. I was relieved, as I'd had no idea where I would get the money. I would never have asked Jan and Rudy: I didn't want them to know.

I returned to the jail and requested a copy of the police report. "You gotta get a lawyer to do that," the cop said.

"I'm my own lawyer. Give me a copy." To my surprise, he did.

375

It was bad news. The story the police and jailers reported was damning. They had charged me with criminal misdemeanor public disturbance but recommend two felonies, attempted burglary and resisting arrest. The report said that the police received a distraught call past 4 A.M. reporting a suspicious individual lurking outside the caller's home. The caller said he believed the person might be armed and would attempt to break into his house, perhaps causing him harm. He was a Crocker Bank vice-president from San Francisco staying at his Tahoe home, and he told the police that he feared being kidnapped for ransom. The officer on duty called a judge and acquired a search warrant after tracing my license plate. The report claimed that I had been uncooperative and verbally abusive. The officer believed I was on drugs even though he found no drugs or alcohol in my car or in my possession. His judgment was based on my behavior, that I resisted fingerprinting and filling out forms, and that I had stumbled. The report noted that in the cell, I'd refused to get into bed and once there I screamed for an hour and then I passed out after breakfast.

Rashomon revisited.

The mug shot appeared to confirm the report. I stared at the stark black-and-white Polaroid and hardly recognized myself. The woman looked like an insane child—wild eyes, a snarling mouth, angry, savage, defiant—or a cornered animal. Or my mother, the last time I saw her.

I walked over to the office of my probation officer. Jeff reassured me and said not to worry. "A misdemeanor doesn't affect your probation." He handed me a business card. "Give him a call. He's a good man."

Back in my apartment, I called the number. Steven was a San Francisco lawyer who worked in Tahoe two days a week. He was in town that day, so we met in his office. I revealed my politics, saying I expected that the FBI was monitoring my activities, and that the arrest may have been a setup. Steven urged me not to plea bargain, to allow him to take it to trial and get it off my record. "They'll keep harassing you if you don't fight back." Then he told me that he was a conscientious objector and had refused to serve in Vietnam. "I fought them. I believe in fighting them."

Be careful." I decided to move to the other side of the lake, across the state border, once my six-month lease expired.

From the Sierra Nevada roof of the Pacific edge of the continent, I watched the world go by in television images. On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* overruled all laws prohibiting abortion. The familiar faces of Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem appeared on the screen lauding the decision as if all the problems of the world were solved. I knew it was an important victory, but it seemed that abortion had become the dominant issue of women's liberation, with all attention focused on winning that one battle. The root causes of the exploitation and oppression of women remained intact, and to me the celebration of this victory seemed hollow and distracting. Finally, I acknowledged that the women's liberation movement as a whole was fundamentally reformist, not revolutionary. I had expected something that it could not produce, any more than the antiwar, student, or civil rights movements could: a socialist revolution. But, as I reflected on my disillusionment, it seemed to me there was hope. It was clear that in the next anti-capitalist surge, feminists would be in the forefront.

In late February, the siege of Wounded Knee, which began on February 27 and ended on May 8, replaced the Vietnam War on the front pages of newspapers and on the television news. Wounded Knee was the logical outcome of "The Trail of Broken Treaties."

Soon after Nixon's reelection the previous November, the television had flashed images of long-haired, painted-faced young Native American men and women occupying the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Building in Washington, D.C. Called "The Trail of Broken Treaties," Native Americans from dozens of reservations, towns, and cities had walked from the West Coast all the way to Washington and had hung a large banner on the BIA building, proclaiming it "The Native American Embassy." The demonstrators addressed a "Twenty Point Program" to Nixon, who had included in his campaign promises of support for "Indian self-determination." The document spelled out what the realization of self-deter-

mination would require of the federal government: that it honor the treaties made with Native Americans and reinstate the treaty-making relationship that had been abandoned in the 1880s.

After the Native Americans had vacated the building, the government reported that there had been over \$2 million in damages. On the other hand, there were reports that the occupants had discovered damning documents that exposed government mismanagement of billions of dollars in Native American trust funds.

The fifth anniversary of the My Lai massacre occurred on the eighteenth day of the standoff at Wounded Knee, the tiny reservation hamlet now surrounded by army tanks, Huey helicopters, and military snipers. It was impossible to avoid the analogy between Wounded Knee and My Lai. Beside the front-page news and photographs of Wounded Knee was a feature with photographs on My Lai. The article stated that Lt. William "Rusty" Calley was serving his twenty-year sentence under house arrest in luxurious officers' quarters at Fort Benning, Georgia. The article claimed that he remained a national hero who received hundreds of support letters weekly, that he was lauded as a "POW held by the U.S.," and that one of his most ardent supporters was Georgia governor Jimmy Carter. One of Calley's acts at My Lai was described: When he saw a baby crawling from a ditch filled with massacred bodies, he picked it up by the leg and threw it back, then shot it point-blank. The article also described an event a few weeks before My Lai wherein Calley had been observed throwing a stooped old man down a well and firing his automatic rifle into the well.

Next to the article on My Lai was an article on Wounded Knee. In between the two articles were two photographs, each of a pile of bloody, mutilated bodies. One was from My Lai, and the other was from the Wounded Knee army massacre of the Sioux in 1890. Had they not been captioned, it would have been impossible to tell the difference in time and place, even in appearance.

Reading Tom Hayden's new book, *The Love of Possession Is a Disease with Them*, and the juxtaposition of television images of the Vietnam War

and the American Indian Movement resistance began to deepen my understanding of what ailed the United States. Tom took the book's title from Sitting Bull's 1877 statement about the U.S. government:

The love of possession is a disease with them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break but the poor may not. They take their tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule.

Tom brilliantly drew analogies between the nineteenth-century wars against Native Americans and the war against Vietnam. The "Viet Cong" were "Indians" in the U.S. military mind. The military referred to guerrilla-controlled territory as "Indian Country," often shortened to "In Country," a term they still use.

During the siege of Wounded Knee, I was hired at Harrah's Club to run change for the slot machine players, a job charmingly titled "slots change girl." Although men also worked in slots, they were called "Key men" and were paid more—they kept the keys to the slot machines to pay off jackpots. I attended an afternoon orientation for all new Harrah's employees which can be summarized in a few simple rules: The customer is always right, except regarding money; no one dies in the club; wear black and white and a smile; no union organizing; no benefits, except up to a 75 percent advance during any month on the next month's paycheck. We were instructed to take our employment contracts to the Douglas County sheriff's substation at Zephyr Cove to obtain the sheriff's cards required by the State of Nevada Gaming Code. They fingerprinted me, and then I had to wait three days for approval or rejection. To my surprise, my sheriff's card came through.

I was assigned to the graveyard shift, 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Upon arrival, I went downstairs to the "bank" to collect my money apron and check out \$1,000 in various denominations and coin rolls. Up on the floor I had my own storage bin and key where I kept my purse and excess rolls of coins.

Then I ran from machine to machine in my assigned section for two hours until break, repeating the process during the eight-hour shift.

I hung out at Harrah's Play Bar after 6 A.M., when I finished my eight-hour shift. I'd made friends with Eli, the graveyard bartender whose shift ended at 8 A.M. He was a Choctaw Indian from Oklahama, raised in California, the son of "Defense Okies"—those migrants who had flocked to California to work in the defense plants during World War II. Eli and I became occasional lovemaking friends with no commitments to each other.

The Play Bar had a large color television. Eli and I watched the live coverage of the Wounded Knee occupation. We rooted for the Native American warriors, watching the images, but with the sound drowned out by a vortex of noise created by silver dollar machines, craps tables, and Keno calls. *Thump, thump, thump*, the silver dollars landed in metal trays, *clack, clack* of the dice, jackpot bells, voices, a symphony. One night before work, I watched part of the Academy Awards. Marlon Brando refused to appear to accept his Best Actor Oscar for *The Godfather*, and instead sent a Native American actress named Sacheen Little Feather to make a statement about the distorted portrayal of Native Americans in the movies. Soon thereafter, Nixon had to back down under the worldwide support for the Native Americans, and the Wounded Knee occupation ended on its seventy-first day. We watched as the warriors emerged from their encampment and surrendered their weapons. They looked defiant, headed for the next battle.

Hannah wrote from Connecticut that she was miserable living with her parents. I encouraged her to join me at Tahoe and assured her that she could easily work in the casino in the spring and summer. When she agreed to come, I was overjoyed. Finally, there would be someone to talk to who shared my history and my secrets. She was the only one from the original group I'd stayed in contact with. The others, especially Homer, hadn't forgiven me for what he perceived as my responsibility for getting us into the underground venture and then abandoning it.

Hannah arrived in May, and we rented a two-bedroom house at Zephyr

Cove in Nevada. Nestled into a hillside, it overlooked the lake, which was framed by the glistening white mountains. Hannah was hired onto the graveyard shift in Keno at Harrah's. We both slept very little. Hannah revived Tae Kwan Do practice, which we did in a wonderful space on the roof of our garage, facing the lake. Each morning after work, we ate breakfast at Harvey's and drove home, practiced our forms and sparred, and then slept for a few hours. We bought hiking boots, and once or twice a week we walked over the spine of the Sierras into the Carson Valley. On our day off, Hannah rode with me to the Bay Area to visit Michelle.

A Tae Kwan Do master began a weekly class at the Tahoe high school gym, and Hannah and I were the first to join. There were only two other women in the class, so Hannah and I persuaded our teacher to allow us to organize an all-women demonstration to recruit women. It felt like old times for a moment. Hannah designed a poster and we tacked it up all around the lake. We held a press conference, resulting in three articles and a picture of me in the local paper. The successful event drew a large crowd and spawned a women's class.

Tahoe was beginning to feel like home. I was still planning to attend law school in the fall, but I was tempted to postpone it for a year to stay and work, save money, and consider the future more carefully. Hannah liked the idea. I had Jan and Rudy, my nieces and nephews, and Hannah—a kind of community. I enjoyed the trips down to the edge of the continent—to the real world—although I wasn't certain I was prepared to live in it yet. I'd been on a long, hard journey. The Sierras, the lake, the desert on the other side of the mountains, were all familiar now. I felt comfortable as one of the transients who worked in the clubs and who asked no questions. Many of us harbored secrets and untold histories. I lived in a protected world of fugitives from life.

There was no sign of the FBI, and my January arrest seemed unrelated to my political past. In July, I had a trial that lasted only a day. My lawyer, Hannah, and I entered the South Lake Tahoe courtroom and discovered that the prosecutor had set up a huge blowup of my mug shot—hair uncombed and stringy, eyes furtive and unfocused, face twisted and ugly.

I saw a woman with a migraine, but I could imagine what the jury would see. The jury was made up of white, middle-aged women and men; several of them were Mormons and two of the men were retired military officers. The only witness against me was the rich banker in whose driveway I'd been stuck. He was an unappealing witness who on cross-examination said, "I assumed she was up to no good. The only kind of woman who would be out at three in the morning had to be a drug-crazed follower of that Manson fellow, or a prostitute." That didn't go over well with people accustomed to twenty-four-hour casino life. I related my story, and the jury believed me. No one revealed my Louisiana conviction, my probation, or my politics; there was no sign that the FBI had intervened. When the jury acquitted me, I felt justifiably exonerated, accepted as a member of the community.

One day, Donna, a Paiute Native woman, came to work in slots on graveyard shift. I asked her what she had thought about the Wounded Knee siege. She told me how her Pyramid Lake community had sent blankets and canned food to the Indian warriors holding out in South Dakota. One morning after work, we went for breakfast together at Harvey's. Afterward, we walked along the Tahoe lakefront. In the shadowed crevice of the mountain west of the lake, snow remained and formed a perfect T-cross. I'd noticed it when I arrived at Tahoe in September before the snows began. "Mount Tallac is so beautiful. Does the snow cross ever melt?" I asked.

"Never has, and I hope it never does. The old folks say the world would come to an end if the snow cross melted," Donna said.

She wanted me to see Pyramid Lake, saying that it was as beautiful as Tahoe. The Truckee River connects the two lakes like Siamese twins. Donna told me that development on the California side was harming the Paiute lake. We drove north for over an hour and stopped on the south shore at a small settlement. A cone-shaped rock jutted up in the middle of the lake.

"Is that rock why you call it Pyramid Lake?" I asked.

"We didn't name it that. We had our very own Christopher Columbus. His name was Colonel John Fremont, and he claimed he discovered the

lake and named it Pyramid." She explained that there were many Paiute and Shoshone reservations in Nevada, some so small they were called "colonies." But the entire desert and the mountains and the lakes had originally belonged to them.

"You're from Oklahoma. Are you Native American?" she asked.

"Yes, but I don't know what tribe. My mother's mother died when she was three years old, and I don't know anything about her, not even her real name. People just always said she was Indian and she died of TB. But my mother didn't like being called an Indian."

"It's not the safest thing to be. Have you thought of working with the Native American movement? You'd sure be welcome to come over and help us out with some problems we have, trying to keep our water rights and all," Donna said.

"Maybe I will," I said. I thought of Marge Piercy's poem, "To Be of Use," and realized how desperately I needed to be of use. But I soon learned that I still had little control over realizing my desires.

On August 3, 1973, the doorbell rang at 11 A.M. I knew that whoever was at the door must be a stranger because we never used that door. We used the back door that opened from the kitchen onto a big stone porch facing Zephyr Cove on the lake and Highway 50 below. I told myself that if it was a Mormon missionary—they were ubiquitous in Nevada—I would politely say no and shut the door on them.

I opened the thick cedar door and knew immediately that the two men in dark suits were not missionaries. Each held a gold badge at exactly my eye level, as if they had calculated my height in advance.

"United States Secret Service." The voice was chilling and echoed off the hill. They seemed like caricatures, and it crossed my mind that I might be seeing double, or even imagining them.

The air was still, with that emptiness of sound that descended just before a tornado struck in Oklahoma. I heard rustling in the water-starved dry brush on the hillside across the street. I imagined men with guns, and I fought the terror that welled up in me.

"May we come in?" The man's voice shattered the nightmarish

moment. I composed myself and fear drained from my body. I breathed deeply and steadily, listening to my breath.

"No. What do you want?" I asked.

"You are Roxanne Dunbar?"

"Call my lawyer." I gave Steven's name and grabbed the door to shut it. A shiny, black, wing-tipped shoe stopped it.

"We have information that you head a terrorist group that trains in the mountains, and that you plan to assassinate the vice-president tomorrow."

"Who's the vice-president?" I really couldn't recall his name, only that before he became Nixon's vice-president he had been a mobster involved in construction racketeering in Maryland, or was it Pennsylvania?

"Honorable Spiro T. Agnew."

"No, on both counts," I said, and tried again to close the door. The foot remained firmly in place.

"We have a handwritten note threatening the vice-president's life. If you'd just provide us with a sample of your handwriting, you can clear yourself of suspicion." The one on my right extended a notepad and pen.

"I'm sure you have samples of my handwriting from the FBI." Did they really think I was so stupid or scared as to sign my name for them?

"When the vice-president speaks here today you will be watched. It is recommended that you do not leave this house until tomorrow morning when the vice-president is gone. The house will be watched from now until then."

I closed the door and sat in the rocker by the picture window looking at the lake. I was trembling. "Think," I told myself. "This is a setup."

I noticed a black sedan parked across the highway. The man inside peered at me through binoculars. I ran from the picture window, drew the drapes, and bolted both doors.

The telephone rang and I jumped. "Careful," I told myself, "it's tapped." It was my father calling from Oklahoma City.

"Roxie, I was worried about you. You all right?"

"I'm fine, Daddy." I suppressed a lump in my throat. I wanted to cry like a child, I wanted my daddy to save me.

"I thought I might better let you know that two strangers was here at the house asking about you awhile ago, Secret Service they call themselves, asking where you live. I told them to get off my porch. You best watch out for them birds. They looked to be mean."

"Thanks, Daddy, it's okay." I cried when I put the phone down. I was certain that had been one of the few times my Scots-stingy father had ever made a long distance call.

I went to the bathroom and splashed cold water on my face. My eyelids felt like they were made of concrete, but I needed to stay awake and alert. I swallowed a No-Doze and made strong coffee. I slid to the floor and hugged my legs, rocking. Paranoia consumed me. I drank coffee, but my eyes soon closed.

Hannah woke me when she came in. "What time is it?" I asked.

"Five in the evening." She knelt beside me. "What's going on, Roxanne? There are men with guns all over the place. One of them stopped me and asked for my ID. He said if I came in I couldn't leave until morning." I explained to her what had happened.

"Have you called a lawyer?"

"Not yet." I picked up the phone, but it was dead.

Hannah prepared stir-fried vegetables and tofu and we ate sitting on the floor in case bullets started flying. It seemed to me very likely that someone somewhere had ordered my assassination.

Hannah crawled to the radio and tuned it to the rock station on the North Shore—the closest local station. "Maybe there's some news about what's happening," she said.

The news flashes did not mention Agnew or the Secret Service. They played the mournful new album by Bob Dylan, the sound track for the new Sam Peckinpah film, *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*.

*They say that Pat Garrett's got your number,
sleep with one eye open when you slumber,
every little sound just might be thunder,
thunder from the barrel of a gun.
Billy you're so doggoned far away from home.*

I thought about the film, about Peckinpah's Billy, a rustic anti-corporate rebel, who never killed anyone with malice or for gain. He was singled out by the law to make an example and to establish state authority in the midst of anarchy. He died for freedom, refusing to adjust to changing times. Peckinpah's Billy the Kid was a metaphor for suppressed rebellion.

I fell asleep listening to the Billy the Kid sound track playing on the radio, and when I woke with the sun, I knew they were gone, that I had survived.

The next day I read in the local paper that Agnew had been in the area to speak at the National Republican governors' conference being held at a Nevada resort. When I got to work at Harrah's just before midnight, I went downstairs to the casino bank to check out money and get my assignment.

"Dunbar, super wants to talk to you. You're off shift tonight." The banker called the supervisor.

"I'll buy you a cup of coffee," the graveyard slots supervisor said. We sat in the nearly deserted employees' cafeteria.

"Your sheriff's card has been lifted," he said.

"Why?"

He shrugged. "You're a good worker. I hate to lose you but Harrah's has to terminate your employment immediately. No sheriff's card, no casino work, it's state gambling code. You know the rules."

"I'll get it reinstated. It's a mistake," I said.

"You might shouldn't bother. Word is that Agnew himself was involved. A man like that has clout here."

"Yeah, he's vice-president of the United States," I said.

"That's peanuts. He has clout in Nevada. I'd get out of this state if I were in your shoes. Here's your paycheck."

I walked slowly up the stairs to the floor, thinking about that time in Louisiana when the SWAT team arrested me at work, and later the conversation with my boss who apologized for having to fire me, orders from the main office in Houston. It seemed to be part of a pattern that could repeat itself forever.

386

I found Hannah behind the Keno counter. "Hannah, did you lose your sheriff's card?"

"Not yet. You did?"

"Yes, and I have to get out of here. It's time to leave."

"I'll turn in my resignation at the end of shift," she said. Hannah was used to running too.

"I'll close up the house and we'll leave in the morning," I said.

I looked at the clock, the midnight hour. The sound of music, a familiar beat from my youth, drew me to the cabaret show lounge. It was Fats Domino himself, like a block of black marble at the piano, singing "Ain't that a shame, tears fall like rain . . ."

Hannah and I moved to the Santa Clara Valley, back where I had tried to start a life the previous year. Soon Hannah took a job as a graphic designer for an older Chicano printer (who she married two years later). I began law school on a four-year evening program and worked full time as a legal secretary at the county legal aid office.

I planned to specialize in labor law, as so many veterans of the New Left were doing. Ann Fagan Ginger, the heroic labor lawyer who was blacklisted during the McCarthy era, was teaching a special course on farm labor law during the fall semester. I was the only woman and the only non-Chicano in the course. Through Ann, I met Phil Berryman from the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers) who was researching the electronics industry in preparation for a union-organizing project. He also wanted to publicize the industry's militaristic core. I already knew a lot about that, thanks to my six-week stint at Fairchild. I quit the legal secretary job to work in an electronics plant in order to organize workers.

I took a job on the graveyard shift at Siliconix, a successful, medium-size, family-owned company that manufactured circuit boards and programmed silicon conductors. The plant operated on a twenty-four-hour, seven-day-a-week schedule. There were around a hundred women on each shift, and the supervisors were all white men. As in all the electronics plants, immigrants with green cards — Filipinas, Koreans, and

387

or at least stand up to them, and they wanted to be able to defend themselves. But my arguments did not faze the union organizers, whose model for organizing was exclusively male. Even Amy began to seem more like an honorary man than a woman to me.

September 10, 1973, was my thirty-fifth birthday. It was two years since I'd decided that armed struggle in the United States was inappropriate and suicidal, two years since the Attica uprising and the massacre of the prisoners. I was in San Francisco for an Attica memorial that was organized by a prison reform group. A black ex-con read from George Jackson's *Soledad Brother*: "I'm going to charge them reparations in blood . . . War without terms." I cried for the martyrs, for the remaining political prisoners, for the dead George Jackson, for those still underground, and for myself, the tears of a survivor. I cried for the crushed dreams and drew hope from the other survivors gathered there, remembering the hundreds who remained in prison, in exile, and underground, and the people of Vietnam who were still being bombed.

Driving home that midnight, I heard the news of the coup in Chile. The elected socialist president, Salvador Allende, was dead. General Pinochet, allied with the United States, had seized power, and thousands were incarcerated in the Santiago soccer stadium.

Santa Clara University was a Jesuit institution, and many of their priests were in Chile, but the next day the campus was quiet. I went to the second floor of the law library to study as usual. I couldn't focus on my assignment, a tort case concerning product liability. I looked out the window and noticed that a knot of people had gathered, with placards condemning the coup and proclaiming CIA complicity. I packed up my books and walked out into the rain to join them.

Only a few days elapsed before movement response to the coup set in. The indications of CIA support and direct involvement unfolded each day as U.S. citizens—priests, nuns, and hundreds of other activists—returned from Chile with horror stories.

The coup had not been a simple changing of the guard, but a vindic-

389

Mexicans—made up the majority of the assembly workers. Those women were often the sole support for extended families in their home countries and I knew they would not risk their jobs and green cards to join the initial phase of union organizing. Still, they made up the majority of the workers and their votes would be required to bring in a union. I needed to win their trust, and so I had to work carefully and quietly.

In dye-testing, I met Amy Newell, a clandestine union organizer for the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). The independent union had resisted McCarthy-era pressure to impose an anti-communist loyalty oath on its members, and the UE was small and politically progressive; its top officers were paid no more than the highest paid rank-and-file member. Amy, a thirty-year-old red-diaper baby, had been working inside Siliconix for two years and was unaware of the Quakers' project, just as they were unaware that UE had an organizer inside one of the plants. Amy's husband was a paid UE organizer on the outside. I immediately recruited my coworker, Betty, a Navajo. On weekends, the three of us women who worked inside met with the men who were strategizing on the outside. One weekend, two top UE officials flew out from New York to meet with us.

At first, realizing my dream of shop organizing women workers dazzled me. But the UE and the Quaker organizers disagreed with my view that to recruit women and get the union voted in we would have to respond to their needs for child care, maternity leave, equal pay for equal work, and freedom from sexual harassment by male supervisors. They didn't think any of these issues were relevant to union organizing. When I suggested to the union officials that a union program offer the women workers free martial arts training, they wouldn't consider it. Just as at Fairchild, women working the graveyard shift at Siliconix reported assaults walking to their cars in the huge, dim parking lot at night; many also complained of being beaten daily by the men in their lives. I'd recruited two coworkers to the local Tae Kwan Do studio Hannah and I had joined, but most of the single mothers couldn't afford it. The women wanted sufficient income and job security to be able to leave their men,

388

tive counterrevolution determined to destroy everyone from the socialist regime. General Pinochet had proclaimed himself dictator and declared martial law, suspending all freedoms and imposing curfews. Thousands were being rounded up and held in stadiums. The morgues could not handle all the corpses. Women were required to wear skirts, men to cut their hair. And that was just in Santiago, the capital.

It was reported that the Mapuche in the rural south were targeted by the military, and hundreds had been massacred or were in hiding, their lands seized. I thought of Mad Bear and wondered if he was there and hoped he was safe. The last time I'd heard from him two years before, he wrote of Chile and described how wonderful it was under Allende and how the Mapuches were benefiting.

Hannah and I threw ourselves into protest activity. Hannah designed and cranked out silk screens on our kitchen table, and her boss printed thousands at no cost. We plastered them all over the Santa Clara Valley. I wrote leaflets.

A list of books banned by the Chilean military circulated; it included all works of Marxism and everything from Cuba, of course, but also Hemingway, Mailer, even Dickens; any publication that was sympathetic to the poor, critical of the Church, anti-Franco, or antiwar was on the list. I looked through the pages and pages of listings and found a section banning all works on women's liberation: *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* and the anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful* were among those listed. My name was on the list of banned authors, and I felt honored.

A hastily assembled coalition of individuals and groups in the South Bay counties were brought together by Stanford professor Patricia Fagan and Father Moriarty, a well-loved activist priest who ministered to the San Jose Mexican farmworker community. On a September Saturday morning a week after the coup, we met at Father Moriarty's parish church. There were twenty or so of us, young and old, women and men, teachers and students, trade unionists, Chicano businessmen, nuns and priests. We sat around four tables that formed a large square. Pat, the Stanford professor, chaired the meeting, flanked by Father Moriarty and

Hannah. Hannah had gotten to know them since the coup, but I was meeting them for the first time that day. Pat asked us each to introduce ourselves. As I listened to the litany of committed lives, I thought about how I should present myself. Not many movement people I'd met in San Jose recognized my name unless I explained who I was, and I usually didn't. I wanted to live without the burden and expectations of my past.

When my turn came, I told only part of the truth: "I have a master's in Latin American history from UCLA and I went to Cuba on the third Venceremos Brigade. I'm a first-year law student at Santa Clara."

The introductions ended, and Pat asked for suggestions for an agenda. A young man sitting directly across from me, who had introduced himself as a representative of a workers' committee, raised his hand and rose from his chair. He was very pale and had short, light brown hair. He wore thick glasses that made his blue eyes seem huge. He extended his arm straight out, his hand folded into a fist with the index finger pointed directly at me.

"That woman is an FBI informer. She must leave. This meeting cannot continue with a known pig in the room."

I was stunned. All eyes turned to me and the room fell silent. I heard children laughing outside the window in the church playground.

"You are out of order, I believe. This is a public meeting, and the motives of those in attendance are irrelevant," Pat said.

The man next to me, who had introduced himself as a trade unionist whispered to me, "He's from the Revolutionary Union and probably FBI himself."

"I've got proof," the RU man bellowed.

"Perhaps you and the person you accuse could step outside and discuss the issue. We need to get on with the meeting," Father Moriarty said.

"No. I will go get the proof and return." He rushed from the room and slammed the door.

"Do you wish to say anything, my dear?" The priest's eyes were kind, his face pained.

"I have no idea what he's talking about. I'm told he's with the RU; in 970 I was briefly a member during the time they were splitting."

"I think that may explain his problem," the priest said. Pat smiled at me.

The meeting continued, but the energy and enthusiasm had drained from my body.

As the meeting was winding up, my accuser slammed back into the room wielding above his head a khaki-colored booklet.

"This is it. Here's the proof that Roxanne Dunbar cooperated with a FBI investigation." He plopped the book open in front of Pat, pointing and gesticulating.

"Surely you don't trust such witch-hunt documents, do you?" Pat said scornfully. "The meeting is adjourned." She pushed the book away and turned to Father Moriarty to talk. Hannah picked up the book and flipped through it. The RU man grabbed it from her and tried to show it to someone else, who also turned away.

I followed him out of the room. "May I have a look at that book?" He turned. Hatred was written on his face. It seemed to me that either he was an unusually talented FBI provocateur or he really believed what he was alleging. He pointed at me. "You'd better watch your back, you're a marked woman." He threw the book on the floor at my feet. "Take it, I have more."

I picked up the book. It was an official government document, dated June 22, 1972, and titled, *America's Maoists: The Revolutionary Union*. It was the report from the Committee on Internal Security of the U.S. House of Representatives, chaired by Republican congressman Richard Ichord, based on the testimony of the Goffs, who I had figured to be FBI. My picture was in it—the mug shot from the Lafayette arrest—with a blurb about me and a long summary of a purported "interview" with me that took place in Houston.

I called my Houston ACLU lawyer and he recommended that I consult his colleague, John Thorne. I went to the San Jose office of movement lawyer John Thorne, one of Angela Davis's lawyers who was

currently involved in the defense of those arrested at Wounded Knee. I showed him the congressional report and told him about the encounter with the RU man.

"That's what they do. They'll try to characterize you as a mad bomber to establishment people and as an informer to the movement in order to neutralize you. The FBI calls the latter bad jacketing. Those antics led to Panthers killing each other, and now I'm seeing it happen with the American Indian Movement. The FBI's goal is to get you to drop out, become inactive, be paranoid, even suicidal. Don't fall for it."

He shuffled through the chaotic mountain of papers and books that completely covered his huge desk, and plucked out a folder. He extracted one sheet—an FBI memorandum dated 5/27/68 and headed: "Counterintelligence Program, Internal Security: Disruption of the New Left." John pointed to a particular paragraph:

Certain key leaders must be chosen to become the object of a counterintelligence plot to identify them as government informants. It appears that this is the only thing that could cause these individuals concern; if some of their leaders turned out to be paid informers. Attacking their morals, disrespect for the law, or patriotic disdain will not impress their followers, as it would normally to other groups, so it must be by attacking them through their own principles and beliefs.

John leaned back in his chair and propped his scuffed cowboy boots on the desk.

"That was 1968, and the target in question was Tom Hayden. Now they have it down to a fine art. The only defense against that kind of tactic is to continue working and organizing. You can't ever disprove a negative. Those who know your work will not lose confidence in you. Just remember there's a lot of paranoia and a lot of opportunism in the movement."

I recalled the rumors I had heard that Tom Hayden was an FBI or CIA operative, and although I had never believed it, other activists had.

"I want to understand why you would choose Santa Clara Law School for your revolutionary activities?" The dean of the law school, a man in his forties with intelligent piercing blue eyes, tapped the folder he held in midair.

"May I see what you have there?" The dean handed me the folder. I flipped through the FBI file. I looked for documents chronicling my time underground and was pleased to find that the FBI had had no idea where I was or what I was doing during the summer of 1971. They knew only that we had armed ourselves and disappeared. This proved that there were no informants in our underground inner circle and that none of our contacts underground had informed on us.

"I have not been charged with any crime and I only want to go to law school," I said. I stood up to leave.

"Well, I can assure that had I received this information prior to your official admission to the law school, you would not have been admitted. However, now my hands are tied and I cannot expel you on these grounds. There are rules of conduct for students in order to remain in good standing. You will be watched closely."

"You mean my professors will be informed?" I asked.

"I didn't say that." But I knew that was what he meant.

I walked outside the law school and crossed the lawn to the old Spanish mission in the center of the campus. I sat down on the cracked adobe mission wall and stared at the whipping post in the mission plaza where the friars had beaten their Native American captives to make good Christian workers out of them.

I was back in John Thorne's office that afternoon. Having John as my attorney was fortunate because he was an excellent lawyer dedicated to social justice; it was fortuitous because he was now on the legal team defending the Wounded Knee occupants. We struck a deal: His legal assistance would be free if I would assist him in the historical research needed for the Wounded Knee cases. That bargain with an angel would ultimately change the direction of my life. Meanwhile, I quit Siliconix, took out a student loan, and signed up for food stamps and a student loan.

I began researching the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty between the Sioux Nation and the United States, and other such treaties, and at the same time I became engaged again with the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that had brought the northern half of Mexico into possession of the United States. Both California Indians and Chicanos were basing their demands for bilingual education and restitution and reparations on that treaty, as was the land grant struggle in New Mexico. I found myself spending more time at the Stanford University library than in the law school library, and without realizing it, I began to gravitate back to my chosen field of history.

Once I began working on the New Mexico land grants research, I tried unsuccessfully to contact Betita Martínez, who two years before had urged me to give up the underground project and encouraged me to work in New Mexico on the land grants issue. I had not seen her since that time. I did learn that Betita and Rees had split up, the paper they published had folded, and Betita was organizing in Las Vegas, New Mexico. The land grant movement, so powerful only a few years before, was hardly visible now. Reies Tijerina, the movement leader, had served a prison term and had emerged from prison disoriented and unbalanced, as had Black Panther founder Huey Newton. Soon, Betita moved to San Francisco.

It began to seem that all the militant organizations were either dead or dying—SNCC, SDS, the Black Panther Party, the Alianza, the Young Lords, the Young Patriots, and the Detroit Revolutionary Union of black workers, as well as most of the early militant women's liberation groups. Replacing the vibrant and anarchic grassroots movements were cultlike organizations controlled by charismatic leaders. One such group in San Francisco was Marlene Dixon's new organization, which later became the Democratic Workers Party. Marlene had visited me in Santa Clara and told me about her project, but I wasn't interested. I never saw her again, although she based her organization in San Francisco and it continued for a decade before crashing under the weight of her heavy-handedness.

Other such leftist and countercultural organizations sprang up around the country. None, however, were quite like the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA), which was armed. In the fall of 1973, the SLA announced

its existence by assassinating the African-American superintendent of the Oakland schools. He was known as a progressive educator whose 1970 appointment had been made possible by the Black Panther Party's militant community organizing. At first, it seemed that the crime was the work of white supremacists since the shooters were identified as white. But the SLA turned out to be the creation of an African-American ex-convict named Donald DeFreeze. His cadre was made up of young white women and men. Nearly all the women came out of women's liberation groups. The SLA's next deed garnered more attention when they kidnapped Patricia Hearst, daughter of Randolph Hearst and granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst, the California newspaper mogul whose king-making and -breaking, warmongering, and imperialistic journalism had earned his newspapers the moniker "yellow journalism."

Most of the SLA members and its founder were ambushed and massacred by law enforcement forces on May 17, 1974. I was in Los Angeles when it happened, and in horror I watched the live television coverage. An assault task force of police, FBI, and U.S. Treasury agents surrounded a house in south central Los Angeles, not far from the site of the 1965 Watts rebellion. They claimed they used a bullhorn to warn the inhabitants. Five minutes elapsed between the first and second warnings. Two minutes later, a policeman fired a tear gas shell into the house. Heavy gunfire followed. The FBI threw incendiary bombs and the house was set ablaze. An FBI officer threatened to arrest a fire chief who wanted to go in and put out the flames. Three hours later, at 6:45 P.M., the fire had burned the house to the ground. Donald DeFreeze, the founder, Nancy Ling Perry, William Wolfe, Patricia Soltysik, Angela Arwood, and Camilla Hall were burned beyond recognition.

Among these were women from the Seattle women's liberation group that Sheila and I had visited in August 1971. I was chilled to realize that the SLA organizational structure and action strategy sounded exactly like what I had proposed in *NO MORE FUN AND GAMES* that year. In a 1976 pamphlet, *The Last SLA Testament*, former SLA members described their objective to transcend race, class, and gender by forming multiracial

guerrilla cells. They had sought to fuse women's liberation, revolutionary nationalism, and Marxism-Leninism. They opposed the bureaucratic and authoritarian nature of classic "democratic centralism," and instead proposed the structure of "federation." My own words from 1971 haunted me: "... the existence of many autonomous units working from a set of strategic principles will be the beginning of a democratic centralist organization and the kernel of the new governmental structure."

I was dismayed that women who had embraced women's liberation were opting for armed struggle, the direction I had taken and abandoned. Yet the direction of the radical feminism disturbed me equally. The August 1973 issue of Gloria Steinem's *Ms.* magazine contained a "manifesto" by Jane Alpert called "Mother-Right: A New Feminist Theory," in which she renounced armed struggle as inherently male. The essay was an open letter to "Sisters in the Weather Underground." Jane Alpert was well into her third year underground. She denounced the Left, especially men like former SNCC and Black Panther leader H. Rap Brown and her former lover and bombing partner, Sam Melville, who'd been massacred at Attica two years before:

And so, my sisters in Weatherman, you fast and organize and demonstrate for Attica. Don't send me news clippings about it, don't tell me how much those deaths moved you. I will mourn the loss of 42 male supremacists no longer.

Only a year earlier she had published a forty-page eulogy to Sam Melville along with all the letters he'd written her from Attica.

But it was Jane Alpert's theory of female biological superiority—what she called "Mother-Right"—that troubled me. *Ms.* magazine seemed to be promoting this theory. Jane wrote that female biology was the basis of women's powers:

Biology is hence the source and not the enemy of feminist revolution ... the intrinsic biological connection between mother and

embryo or mother and infant gives rise to those psychological qualities which have always been linked with women . . . Motherhood must be understood here as a potential which is imprinted in the genes of every woman; as such it makes no difference to this analysis of femaleness whether a woman ever has borne, or ever will bear, a child.

"Mother Right" sounded like the same old trap for women, proclaiming freedom in biology and declaring victory based on nothing. It seemed to be asking women to give up the fight, to forget about forcing men to change, and to give up on changing the world. I wrote a response that was published in the January 1974 issue of *Ms. magazine*:

Having felt the feelings Jane Alpert expresses, and having formulated approximately the same feminist analysis five years ago, I feel particularly compelled to write what is essentially a reassessment of my own thinking. Basically, I believe that the liberation of women constitutes the ultimate liberation of humankind. However, I must take issue with certain of Ms. Alpert's beliefs.

Jane Alpert argues that biological makeup gives women potential strengths, powers, and insights which are extremely valuable and necessary to a society for other than child-rearing and housekeeping purposes. In the past these attributes have been used to "keep women in their place," and confine them solely to mothering functions. Only in recent years of awakening feminism have we begun to ask radical questions about the role and future of women.

We have learned that academicians, mostly male, have minimized the importance of past matriarchies and even denied their existence. However, our interpretation of information concerning matriarchies and female contributions to civilization can lead us to mysticism. Jane Alpert states that the "uprising of women . . . must be an affirmation of the power of female consciousness, of the Mother." From such an uprising she believes that the changes

which would necessarily follow would be primarily "spiritual and religious" rather than economic and social. She therefore affirms a mystical interpretation of history: "Feminism . . . is closely tied to theories of awakening consciousness, of creation and rebirth, and of the oneness of the universe—teachings which lie at the heart of all Goddess-worshipping religions." What she sees as the present movement toward awakening consciousness seems to be based more on the Buddhist cults, which are not Goddess-worshipping religions.

While I believe that the female is most likely biologically superior to the male, such arguments do not lead us far. The fact is that women are in a dependent and exploited position in a competitive, profit-making culture. Neither mysticism nor technology is going to extricate us . . .

I do not believe in Mother Right, or any other "right." Many men are just as exploited, deprived, and weakened by our destructive culture as women are. I do agree with the contention that potential or actual motherhood creates certain qualities in women which are universally valuable and necessary for survival and progress. I think the male can learn to respect and perhaps adopt these attributes, if trained to do so early in life. I believe these natural and positive qualities in women have been greatly perverted in our culture. Instead of inner peace, we find passivity; instead of nurturance, possessiveness; instead of patience, indifference; instead of care, jealousy. What is natural is not inevitable. Our goal should be to create the social framework which frees the positive. . . .

American women are coming alive and acting in ways which did not seem possible a few years ago. But I think we are mistaken to put faith in the efficacy of an all-women revolution. I once developed an analysis called "Caste and Class" where I essentially dismissed the value of class analysis and stressed a "caste" theory, establishing women as the revolutionary vanguard by "right." In the past few years, returning to industrial labor after several years of aca-

democratic life and political work, I have seen that the caste theory is erroneous and does not match up with reality. I have experienced the strength and potential of the working class, particularly the women. The workingwomen will gain freedom for all women. I believe this is where our priorities and energies should be if we truly care to achieve the full and permanent liberation of women.

A week after I sent the letter, Ms. editor Gloria Steinem called inviting me to write an article, saying she was happy to hear I still existed. I told her I had said all I had to say in the letter.

My work on the Sioux treaty brought me into the Bay Area Indian community. In the 1950s, when the U.S. Congress legislated the Indian Reorganization Act, the goal was to empty remaining Native lands of their inhabitants and to abolish Indian status. To implement that goal, the Eisenhower administration established the Indian Relocation Program, headed by Dillon Meyer, who had been director of Japanese-American relocation during World War II. Several industrial centers across the country—Cleveland, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Phoenix, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area—were designated as relocation centers. By the time Native resistance was able to halt the policy, thousands of American Indians from dozens of reservations and communities had been resettled in the Bay Area. Since they lived dispersed among other poor and minority communities, they didn't form a ghetto, but they did build Indian centers all over the area, and the largest was in San Jose. Once I was welcomed into the Bay Area Indian community, I met Indians everywhere—on the job, in my apartment complex, in the bars, and I went to Indian powwows and basketball tournaments. My Navajo neighbor, Wanda Hadley, introduced me to the Navajo-Hopi land dispute and took me home to Big Mountain to meet her family, who were adding resistance to Navajo relocation.

At the end of the academic year in May 1974, I decided not to continue law school; rather I would complete my doctorate in history. My decision

followed a letter I received from my former adviser, who was now chairman of the UCLA history department; it was a sort of amnesty and an invitation for me to return and submit a Ph.D. dissertation. I replied that I would do so if I could write on the history of the Spanish and Mexican land grants in New Mexico and if my former graduate school colleague, now a full professor, Juan Gómez-Quiñones, could serve as my committee chair. Those requests were granted, and I began my research in earnest.

My main reason for completing the doctorate was to be able to participate in the development of Native American studies in universities and colleges. This had been a central demand that followed the Alcatraz occupation, and I had gotten to know the Native scholars and graduate students involved. It seemed to me that I could be of use.

After the spring law school exams, I went to New Mexico, where I combed the Spanish and Mexican archives in Santa Fe and interviewed land grant heirs all over northern New Mexico. And there it was, an ongoing revolutionary history beginning with the Pueblo Indian revolt against the Spanish in 1680 and continual resistance after the Spanish returned. Another revolt by the Pueblos and the poor Hispanic settlers in 1837 was waged against Mexico, and again in 1847 they fought the U.S. invasion, then there was the 1967 land grant struggle. Fighting for land and freedom was an ongoing battle. I would write that history as a chapter in the story of continual resistance to colonialism.

I wrote my dissertation during the summer of 1974 in a women's residence hall across the street from the UCLA campus. The room was sparse and tiny, without a phone, and the bathroom was communal. I enjoyed the combination of privacy and community that the residence offered, as well as the company of other women graduate students from Kenya, Iran, Chile, and Japan, working on projects in diverse fields, from engineering and physics to linguistics and musicology.

I submitted my dissertation, "A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico: From Precolonial Times to the Present," the day President Richard Nixon resigned under the threat of impeachment, August 8, 1974. Nixon had resigned, and for about five minutes after hearing the

news, I considered claiming a victory for the movement. I told myself, "We brought Nixon down. We forced a president to resign." But the Mexican cook in the residence house put things into perspective for me. "No significa nada," he said when I asked him what he thought of Nixon's resignation: "Meaningless." The cook didn't expand on this, but I knew what he meant. Now we would have an easygoing golf pro for president instead of a sleazy criminal. Henry Kissinger remained as secretary of state. The FBI wouldn't change that much, even with J. Edgar Hoover dead, and the CIA was intact as part of the shadow government. The United States was still hanging on in Vietnam and would continue to invade or destabilize other small countries that tried to act independently.

I had not expected to live to be thirty-six years old, my age in April 1975, when the television news broadcast scenes of U.S. personnel huddling on top of the U.S. embassy in Saigon, praying for their lives and waiting to be evacuated. But there I was, still alive, and determined to find a way to keep fighting. The way I chose was Native American liberation, soon expanding to international indigenous issues. In my research on the background of the Wounded Knee siege and on the colonization of New Mexico, I had concluded that every promising social revolution in U.S. history had lacked a historically based theory, and they had led only to reforms because none of them ever addressed the U.S. origin story. Finally, with the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Wounded Knee siege, the very scaffolding of the *legitimacy* of the United States had been challenged. Theft, genocide, greed, and white supremacy formed the foundation stone for that pyramid found on the U.S. dollar bill. Beneath the official story lurked the secrets. With the doctorate, I believed, I would receive the right to be a keeper of the secrets and I planned to give them all away.

In March 1975, U.S. military and civilian personnel fled Saigon and the war ended; the United States had suffered a humiliating defeat. At the moment the news reached me, I was a member of the San Francisco Bay Area American Indian Movement Council, attending a meeting on the

development of a cultural center that was founded by a Chilean exile. We were meeting in an old building that would soon become the La Peña Cultural Center on Shattuck, near Ashby, in Berkeley. Someone arrived late and informed us that the war was over. We joined the others who were gathering to dance in the streets.

The war was finally over.

Epilogue UN-FORGETTING

In Greek, I read it somewhere, the word for truth, aletheia, is not the opposite of lie as one would expect, but of lethe, forgetting . . . [truth] is un-forgetting.
— André Brink, *An Act of Terror*

A FEW YEARS ago, I resumed correspondence with Martin Legassick, who'd been Audrey's boyfriend when I first knew him. After three decades in exile, Martin had returned to South Africa with the ANC victory in the 1993 post-apartheid elections. Then, in the summer of 1999, I visited South Africa for the first time at his invitation, to participate in a meeting of the South African Historical Society. Three of us, in addition to Martin, who had been UCLA graduate students in the mid-sixties and members of a campus anti-apartheid solidarity group, attended the conference. In the opening plenary, Martin introduced us as members of the first anti-apartheid solidarity group in the United States. I had not known—or had forgotten—that that was the case, and it was one of the proudest moments of my life.

"Not Telling: Secrecy and Lies in History" was the name of the conference, one of thousands of activities spawned by the liberation of South Africa from the apartheid regime. Although not organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the conference reflected the

theme of truth and reconciliation that the TRC had popularized throughout the country. Coming from the United States, where lying is normalized and history is distorted while collective historical guilt lies buried and useless in the individual mind, a month of being surrounded by "un-forgetting" was exhilarating and instructional. But it was also disturbing. I tried to comprehend the urge to reconcile with such an underserving enemy as the perpetrators of apartheid.

Hundreds of South African—and some foreign—scholars, librarians, teachers, and archivists presented papers and discussed the haunted past and the lies that had been told all around—lies told by the apartheid regime in order to rule, lies the masses told themselves in order to survive, lies told by the liberation movements in order to fight, and lies institutionalized by the apartheid regime in the history texts, in the museums and libraries.

Following the conference, I rented a car and drove, alone, nearly 2,000 miles visiting universities, libraries, museums, and monuments. At first, I was surprised to see that the mammoth *Voortrekker* Monument outside Pretoria remained untouched. It is a unique monument to settler colonialism, rather like all the Washington, D.C., monuments and Mount Rushmore combined, complete with the founding fathers and frescos of pioneers fighting off "invading savages." The effect, however, given the sea change that had taken place in the country, was jarring. Once the white supremacist regime was toppled in South Africa, the official history and the origin story disintegrated, so that the museums and monuments and history texts now appear ludicrous and even quaint. One could make a good argument for maintaining those monuments as a reminder of the lies that were told before the truth was confronted.

In the United States, however, similar monuments and histories that proudly tell the story of white settlement and the land they "conquered" remain the scaffolding of the official national origin story, which although contested, remains intact. Despite the fissures provoked by the sixties' movements, the ideological hegemony of American exceptionalism reigns.

U.S. historians are trained to be the keepers of the secrets and protectors of the myth, so we can't count on them to un-forget. As Gore Vidal

observes, "With historians like ours, who needs Göebbel?" Ever since the cultural upheavals of the 1960s and subsequent demands for some kind of re-telling of the story, mainstream historians have countered with calls for "objectivity," "fairness," and "balance" in revising interpretations of U.S. history. They warn against "moralizing," calling for a dispassionate and culturally relative approach. However, explaining stolen land and genocide as a period of "cultural conflict and change" avoids the truth about the formation of the United States. Furthermore, responsibility toward that past can be rejected.

Most U.S. citizens don't think of their country at its founding as thirteen small colonies clinging to a small part of the North Atlantic shore, but rather the continental expanse from ocean to ocean—"from sea to shining sea"—and from Canada to what was until the 1840s the middle of Mexico, the Río Grande. We must un-forget how that transition happened. In fact, the elimination of the Native occupants of the land and African slavery were crucial for the accumulation of capital and for the U.S. "republic for empire," as Thomas Jefferson put it. Genocide is the subtext of the Constitution and its implementation. And a by-product of both the genocide, land theft, and the maintenance of African slavery was the integration of white supremacy (and patriarchal Christianity) into the republican project.

Even as a radical, without the education I received inside the Native American struggle, I would not have learned those well-kept secrets about the very origins of the United States. Though I did accept a teaching position and have taught in the university setting for twenty-eight years now, I decided early on not to pursue the normal career of an academic historian, but rather to help develop and legitimate the Native American and the ethnic studies fields. Above all, I was determined to remain an activist, and this led me to many years' work in international human rights, mainly in New York, Geneva, Nicaragua, and California.

When the Vietnam War ended I knew the road ahead would be difficult but I believed that we could eradicate capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and

if we continued to organize and fight for our goals. It didn't turn out at way. Not yet. However, one thing is clear to me: A truly revolutionary moment occurred during the war years, and it wasn't confined to the United States or to one generation.

Something new happened then, something deeper and more radical than ever before in history: Women of all ages and backgrounds rose up and would not be put back down, and gay men and lesbians proclaimed their right to be. It was not a matter of sexual or lifestyle choices alone, the media would have it; rather, it went to the heart of the ruling patriarchal civilizations. The other received consciousness from the period as of the structural nature of white supremacy, both within the United States and as the justification for colonialism and imperialism. What is often maligned as "identity politics" actually dragged civil rights out of the traditional "piece-of-the-pie" electoral Americanism and produced a critique of internal colonialism, linking "domestic" struggles with national liberation movements worldwide. For once, in the history of the United States, a significant number of us told ourselves the truth.

As I write this in January 2002, we face the same problems that confronted us during the Vietnam period: war, imperial domination, suppression of civil liberties, COINTELPRO-type revival in a far more draconian form, and a huge patriarchal backlash, with rampant growth of Islamism, Christianism, and Zionist movements. Now more than ever, we must un-forget the past as the very survival of ourselves and humanity depends on it—from an honest un-forgetting of the long history that has led us to this point, to a re-evaluation of our immediate past. That's the past we can do—tell ourselves the truth. But as Salvadoran revolutionary and poet Roque Dalton observed: "To denounce the infinite generality of evil / while proposing solutions the size of an ant" is a dodge. Our project as socially conscious beings must be, as it was during the war years, nothing less than the total transformation of human societies.

During the "American War," as the Vietnamese call it, National Liberation Front representatives used to tell us that the struggle for freedom is precious and that it would take as long as it took. They said that

they regarded the American War as only a marker in their long struggle for freedom and independence. I've heard the Mayans from Guatemala and Chiapas express the same sentiment. And the U.S. civil rights movement hymn, "Freedom is a constant struggle," can be embraced only if it is unlinked from the false history of freedom that is still used as a point of departure.

It is essential that we "un-forget" these things as we engage in present and future struggles. We must all tell ourselves and our children and our children's children our stories of the war years, just as Native Americans retell their stories of struggle, keeping the warrior heart beating, taking pride in our outlaw status from an illegal system.

This is our struggle, and therein lies our future.



Photo: Stacey Lewis

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is the author of a previous memoir, *Red Dirt: Growing up Okie*, as well as numerous scholarly books and articles, including *The Great Sioux Nation*, *Roots of Resistance*, and *Indians of the Americas*. She is currently working on a memoir of her life during the 1980s, *Neither: Re-Covering Nicaragua* and a historical novel based on the life of Belle Starr.

Since 1975, Roxanne has remained active in social justice movements, particularly in the field of international human rights. She is a cofounder and director of the Indigenous World Association, a United Nations consultative non-governmental organization, and has participated in various U.N. conferences on racism and on the rights of women over the past three decades, most recently the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001.

She lives in San Francisco with her Abyssinian cat, Smilla, and is a professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies at California State University, Hayward.

OUTLAW WOMAN

A MEMOIR OF THE WAR YEARS, 1960-1975

In 1968, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz became one of the founders of the early women's liberation movement. Along with a small group of dedicated women, she produced the seminal journal series, *No More Fun and Games*.

Dunbar-Ortiz was also a dedicated anti-war activist and organizer throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During the war years she was a fiery, indefatigable public speaker on issues of patriarchy, capitalism, imperialism, and racism. She worked in Cuba with the Venceremos Brigade and formed associations with other revolutionaries across the spectrum of radical and underground politics, including the SDS, the Weather Underground, the Revolutionary Union, and the African National Congress. But unlike the majority of those in the New Left, Dunbar-Ortiz grew up poor, female, and part-Indian in rural Oklahoma, and she often found herself at odds not only with the ruling class but also with the Left and with the women's movement.

Dunbar-Ortiz's odyssey from dust-bowl poverty to the urban radical fringes of the New Left gives a working-class, feminist perspective on a time and a movement that forever changed American society.

Outlaw Woman is the story, bold and honest, of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's extraordinary journey—political, ideological, personal—through the sixties and early seventies . . . in and out of one of the most important feminist and revolutionary movements of that remarkable time in American history. . . . It illuminates all those experiences with unsparing scrutiny and emerges with a new vision of the independence."

—Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*

"*Outlaw Woman* is a memoir of an extraordinary time in U.S. history . . . Roxanne's journey through some of the era's most important movements and events allows us to revisit those times—whatever our own position, then or now. *Outlaw Woman* is stark, unrelenting, honest, and powerful. . . . It is a time when a diverse subculture cared, a time that should make us proud."

—Wendell Smallall, activist and author of *Sandino's Daughters Revisited*



Aunt Lute's Books • San Francisco • Cover design by Rex Ray
Dustjacket design by • \$17.95 • Women's Studies/American History

